

Announcement of Federal Funds for Craig County Broadband Expansion

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August 4, 2010

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Paint Bank, Virginia

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I am pleased to return to Paint Bank today to mark another major success in our effort to expand high-speed Internet services throughout Southwest Virginia.

At my urging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Recovery Act broadband grant program, is providing \$1 million to bring high-speed Internet access services to more residents of Craig County.

More than fifteen years ago, I encouraged local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents throughout our region. My goal in making this recommendation was to set our region apart in comparison to other rural areas of the nation, to make us more attractive than the typical rural region to industries looking to expand their

operations into new locations, and to create technology-based jobs for Southwest Virginians.

And today, we are announcing the latest step in our efforts to expand high-speed Internet services throughout Southwest Virginia. At my urging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service has awarded a grant of \$1,066,321 to New Castle Telephone Company, a subsidiary of TDS, which currently provides telephone services to Craig County residents, to establish high speed Internet access services in the communities of Paint Bank, Abbott and Webb's Mill in Craig County.

With the benefit of the federal funds, TDS will construct a broadband network to serve 295 homes, four businesses and which currently do not have access to high-speed Internet services. In addition to the Paint Bank, Abbott and Webb's Mill communities in Craig County, the new services will also reach into the surrounding portion of Monroe County, West Virginia, providing service to the Sugar Grove School. Construction on the new broadband network will begin immediately and will employ 28 workers during the course of its installation.

The new high-speed Internet access services will provide Craig County residents with new opportunities for communications, education, entertainment, shopping and conducting business online. Local entrepreneurs will be able to enhance their businesses with online tools and reach new customers, and Craig County residents will have the option of telecommuting.

Just as first canals, then railroads and then highways were the major arteries of commerce in earlier eras, in the 21st Century, access to broadband will be a defining feature of economic success for rural communities. Step by positive step our expanding broadband infrastructure is assuring that our region's communities will be at the center of economic opportunity.

I would like to thank Ellen Davis, State Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency. Ellen has been instrumental in securing the federal funds that have helped us bring high-speed Internet services to new residents across the Ninth District, and I want to recognize her today for her work.

I also want to thank Richard Jenkins, the USDA's Rural Utilities Service Regional Field Representative, whose efforts were instrumental in securing the funds for Craig County.

I also want to thank Milly Harrison, Chair, Jennifer Durling, who represents this area, and the other members of the Craig County Board of Supervisors for their leadership and foresight in pursuing an expansion of high-speed Internet services to more Craig County residents.

I also want to recognize Dave Wittwer, President and CEO of TDS, and his excellent staff for their work on behalf of Craig County residents.

Finally, I would like to recognize Laura Lee, my Deputy Chief of Staff, for the work she has performed for this project. I place a high priority in my office in obtaining successes much like the one we celebrate today, and Laura's work is vital to our efforts to deploy new broadband technology throughout Southwest Virginia.

The high-speed Internet services that will soon be available in Paint Bank, Abbott and Webbs Mill are an excellent example of what can be achieved when citizens, private enterprises and government officials at the local and federal levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work in providing high-speed Internet service for Paint Bank, I want to commend all here and offer special congratulations to the residents who will soon receive new broadband services.